

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 22, 1880.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. McMILLAN, from the Committee on Commerce, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 828.]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (S. 828) extending the privileges of sections 2990 to 2997, inclusive, of the Revised Statutes of the United States, to the port of Saint Louis, in the State of Missouri, have considered the same, and submit the following report:

The committee submitted the bill to the Secretary of the Treasury for his consideration and an expression of his views thereon, and received his reply, which is hereto attached.

Concurring in the views of the Secretary of the Treasury expressed in the communication referred to, the committee recommend that the bill referred to, herewith returned to the Senate, be indefinitely postponed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, March 13, 1880.

SIR: Acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 9th instant, submitting, for an expression of my views thereon, Senate bills No. 828, extending the privileges of sections 2990 to 2997, inclusive, of the Revised Statutes, to the port of Saint Louis, Mo., and Nos. 829 and 856, extending the privileges of section 2997 of the Revised Statutes to Kansas City and Saint Joseph, Mo., and Omaha, Nebr., respectively, I have the honor to say in reply that Saint Louis is designated by section 2997, Revised Statutes, as a port to which goods may be transported without appraisement, and with the present facilities for transportation direct importation of foreign merchandise cannot be made at that port.

Even if it were practicable for foreign vessels to ascend the Mississippi as far as Saint Louis, a law making that city a port of entry would be of doubtful expediency, and would increase the cost of collecting and protecting the revenue. Under the present law Saint Louis has all the advantages as to importations of foreign merchandise that can be practically conferred upon an interior port.

The ports of Saint Joseph and Kansas City and the office of surveyor of customs at those points were discontinued by the Secretary of the Treasury on the 30th of November, 1875, pursuant to authority conferred by section 253, Revised Statutes. Omaha is still a port of delivery at which duties on appraised goods, transported from other ports in bond, may be collected. The total duties collected at that port during the last fiscal year were \$822.21.

Unappraised goods may now be transported to Chicago and Saint Louis, the two great distributing points for the West, at both of which ports there are experienced entry clerks and appraisers, and it is suggested that if the cities named in the inclosed bills are designated as ports of destination for unappraised goods, similar measures may be expected in the interest of every considerable interior city in the country, thus enormously increasing the expense of collecting the revenue, and extending the opportunities for fraud by smuggling and false classifications.

I am clearly of the opinion that the interests of the government and of merchants will be best promoted by confining the importation and appraisement of foreign merchandise to large commercial centers, where, on account of the volume of business transacted, competent corps of officials for the classification, examination, and appraisement of the various classes of foreign merchandise imported may be properly and economically maintained.

It is obvious that imported goods should not be allowed to pass out of the custody of the government without that intelligent scrutiny required for the proper assessment of duty under our intricate tariff laws, upon the just and equal administration of which depends the interests of the mercantile community as well as the safety of the revenue.

For these reasons I am unable to recommend the passage of the bills submitted to me, which are herewith returned.

Very respectfully,

JOHN SHERMAN,
Secretary.

Hon. S. J. R. McMILLAN,
United States Senate.